



city of
greenville

News Release

FACADE IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM MAKING BIG IMPACT ON COMMERCIAL CORRIDORS

(Greenville SC) The City of Greenville's Commercial Corridors Facade Improvement Program (FIP) provides financial and technical design assistance to commercial property and business owners for qualified facade improvements. The purpose of the FIP is to support the revitalization of commercial corridors by stimulating private investment in improvements that enhance the appearance of buildings and properties and eliminate blight and non-conforming design standards. The program provides for a one-time reimbursement, up to \$10,000 per property, for voluntary facade improvements. Eligible improvements include exterior building improvements (cosmetic and/or structural), signage, lighting and landscaping, which are visible from the street. Fees for architects, engineers or other design consultants are also eligible expenses.

Applicants are eligible for a 50% reimbursement on expenses equal to or less than \$10,000. For additional expenses above \$10,000, the City will reimburse the applicant up to 20% of eligible expenses. Eligible applicants include owners of commercial properties and owners/managers of businesses located in the following commercial districts within the city of Greenville: Augusta Street, Laurens Road at Pleasantburg Drive, Pete Hollis Boulevard, Rutherford Street, Stone Avenue, Wade Hampton Boulevard and West Greenville. According to Tracy Ramseur, development coordinator for the City of Greenville, these corridors were strategically chosen for the program. "By focusing our efforts along smaller scale corridors in select areas of the city, we're able to make a greater impact," said Ramseur.

Applications for participation in the program are reviewed by a committee composed of three City staff members and two members of the Greenville chapter of the American Institute of Architects. Once an application is submitted, the applicant usually receives a response from the committee within a week. Committee members work closely with each applicant, and provide them with valuable professional feedback. Eligible projects must be completed within one year of approval, and applicants typically receive their reimbursements within two weeks of completion.

First established in 2001 as the Pleasantburg Drive Facade Improvement Program, the program's original purpose was to stimulate private investment in the Pleasantburg Drive Overlay District. In 2009, City Council passed a resolution establishing a Commercial Corridors Facade Improvement Program. Funding for the program is provided through the City's Capital Improvement Program. Since the program's inception, 43 projects have been completed, and a total public investment of \$360,000 through the FIP has resulted in \$23,000,000 in private investment. In 2014, nine businesses from various commercial corridors participated in the program, with improvements ranging from new paint and awnings to decorative stonework and landscaping.

One of the businesses that recently benefited from the program is Dahlia A Florist, located on Stone Avenue. Owner Kristi Berry received just under \$6,000 to help pay for landscaping improvements in front of her business. Improvements included an irrigation system, upgraded stonework and additional flower beds. According to Berry, she had dreams of what she wanted the front of her business to look like, but did not think it was financially feasible. "When I was given this opportunity through the City, it was that extra help I needed in order to see the project through," said Berry. "I think many small business owners are skeptical of applying for such programs thinking that there will be too many hoops to jump through, but that definitely wasn't the case with the Facade Improvement Program."

Other recently completed projects are Community Journals' new office on Perry Street in the Village of West Greenville, which features a new storefront and signage, and Carolina Architectural Lighting + Design on South Pleasantburg Drive, which received funding for a new brick facade and windows. In addition to the projects completed last year, another eight businesses have been approved for funding and have projects pending. One of the pending projects is the small shopping center near the intersection of Blythe Drive and Augusta Street, which owners plan to repaint and add a stone veneer, metal awnings and new lighting.

According to Ramseur, the program is becoming increasingly popular; something she attributes not only to word of mouth, but also to local brokers who have helped by promoting the program to prospective buyers and tenants. Ramseur also believes including design fees as an eligible expense encourages businesses to use professional services, which results in higher quality projects. "Enhancing the commercial corridors is a City Council priority, and the FIP demonstrates the City's commitment to facilitating private development and supporting existing businesses by providing a direct incentive to property and business owners in those areas."

Berry has also been helpful in promoting the program by encouraging fellow small business owners who have access to the FIP to take advantage of it. "I am continually getting positive comments and feedback from customers and North Main residents about how great my store looks," Berry concluded. "And that makes me not only happy for my business, but also proud to be able to contribute to improving Stone Avenue and Greenville."

For more information about the City's Facade Improvement Program, visit <http://www.greenvillesc.gov/EconDev/FacadeImprovement.aspx>.

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